



MRCOG's VIEWS

Mid-Region Council of Governments

Spring 2004, Volume 2, Issue 1

Moving Forward with Regional Rail. . . Demos, Agreements and Funding

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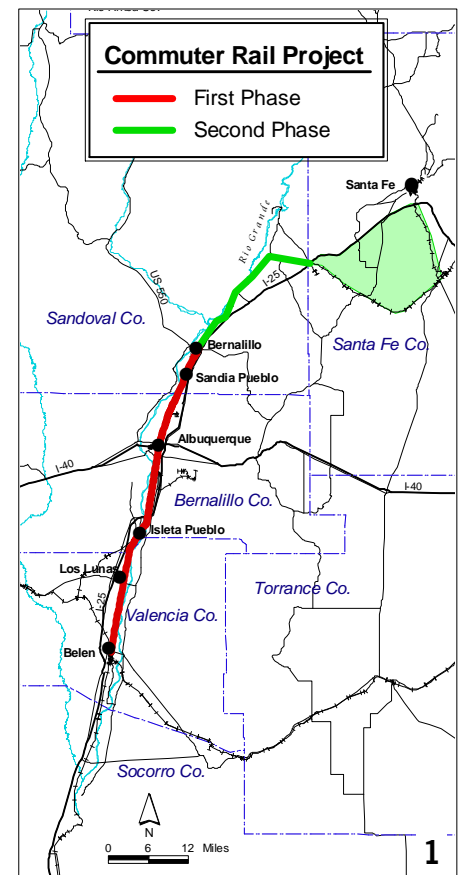


Governor Bill Richardson (top, at right) and MRCOG Executive Director Lawrence Rael prepare to board the commuter rail car. Secretary Rhonda Faught, NMDOT, and Governor Stuart Paisano, Sandia Pueblo, listen during the press conference (lower left; courtesy of D. Hernandez), while Mayor Ronnie Torres and Councilor Terese Ulivarri (MRCOG Vice Chair) of Belen enjoy the ride (lower right).

In recent months, MRCOG has made excellent progress towards the implementation of the rail service between Belen, Albuquerque, and Bernalillo. MRCOG has commenced negotiations with track owner, Burlington Northern-Santa Fe, and expects to reach an operating and capital agreement soon. Once an agreement is in place, work can begin on track upgrades and other required safety and infrastructure improvements. Subsequent steps include developing service schedules, locating and building stations, obtaining railcars, linking rail service to local transit systems, and educating area residents about passenger rail plans and progress.

Since the beginning of the year, the Governor's office and the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) have committed \$53 million in state funding for capital construction costs of the Belen to Bernalillo passenger rail. Governor Richardson announced that he will dedicate \$50 million from the GRIP transportation program to the project's capital construction, and directed another \$3 million in capital outlay funds. In February, the Legislature approved a local-option gross receipts tax that will allow voters to approve tax revenue for transportation programs. That revenue could be used to fund operating costs of passenger rail.

To learn more about passenger rail the passenger rail project, please visit the MRCOG website and click on "Passenger Rail".



Regional Water Plan Accepted by the Local Governments

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Councilor, City of Belen

Executive Director

Lawrence Rael

Next Steps . . .

Implementing the Regional Water Plan

Following acceptance of the Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan by the Interstate Stream Commission, efforts towards implementing the water management activities recommended in the Plan will begin. Specifically, Chapter 11 of the Regional Water Plan presents a strategy for implementation that could affect virtually all water providers and consumers in the region. Implementing the plan will depend on adequate funding and coordinated local initiatives to manage water more efficiently.

Methods and Procedures:

As envisioned in the implementation section of the Regional Water Plan, an organizational structure and common set of standards and procedures will be established for the Middle Rio Grande communities. It is proposed that a multi-agency implementation team be created to actively encourage and promote the coordination of water management activities at local and regional levels. In many cases, the team will be able to provide oversight and assistance to local water management agencies. The implementation strategy also includes the development of a regional water data base and a water monitoring process.

Involvement at a Local Level:

Local governments are encouraged to prepare a "Local Plan of Action" to manage their water resources, based on a regional template to be prepared by the implementation team. Sources of funding for implementing the regional water plan will also be investigated to ensure dedicated support for on-going and future water management programs. ■

MRCOG Supporting Agriculture with New Task Force

Don't let the drought fool you into believing that New Mexico is **not** an agricultural state. The bottom line is that there are plenty of viable farmers throughout New Mexico, and many of them are right here in the four-county region encompassed by the boundaries of MRCOG.

That's why MRCOG is facilitating an Agribusiness Task Force to promote the economic viability of the region's agricultural sector. The task force will identify markets for locally-grown agricultural products, better irrigation methods, and potentially higher-value crops. The ultimate goal of the task force is to keep land in agricultural use. The Task Force members represent a broad cross-section of stakeholders from the agricultural sectors – from growers, extension agents, and processors... to restaurants, grocery stores, and scientists. High tech companies, and representatives from government agencies, including water specialists, organic commodity representatives, economic development specialists, and elected officials are also among the members that make up this landmark agribusiness group.



Currently, task force members are pursuing state and federal funding opportunities in order to establish a local agricultural database to quantify the type, location, and economic impact of agricultural activities. The funds would also help inventory the producers, suppliers and buyers of agricultural-related products in the Middle Rio Grande region. This is all useful information that will help the group better serve those who live and work in the four-county area served by MRCOG.

For more information please contact Randall Falkner, Regional Planner at 247-1750. ■

2004 Legislative Update

The 2004 Legislature acted on many of the issues identified by the MRCOG Board of Directors as priorities for local governments in this region. The Fiscal Year '05 **state budget** includes \$74,888 for MRCOG and each of the state's other planning and development districts, a \$21,400 increase over last year, and \$100,000 in new capital outlay funding to help MRCOG acquire **permanent office space**. The Governor also dedicated \$3 million to capital construction for **passenger rail services** along the Belen – Albuquerque – Bernalillo corridor and \$4.6 million for extending rail service to Santa Fe. That money will be used for rolling stock, right-of-way acquisition, station construction, track improvements, or other infrastructure investments required for passenger rail service.

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WORKFORCE CONNECTION of Central New Mexico

What is Workforce Connection? And how is MRCOG involved?

Last year, MRCOG was selected as the Administrative Entity for the **Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM)**. Workforce Connection is a workforce development program under the provisions of the Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) - the latest in a series of programs aimed at helping American workers find jobs that can meet their economic needs.

The intent of the WIA is to streamline services by consolidating more than sixty federal training programs through three block grants to the states:

- Adult Employment and Training
- Disadvantaged Youth Employment and Training
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WIA authority transferred from the federal level to states and local areas

The goals of the Workforce Investment Act are to:

- increase employment, retention, and earnings of participants
- increase occupational skills of participants
- improve quality of the workforce
- reduce welfare dependency
- enhance productivity and competitiveness of New Mexico and the Nation.

Workforce Connection consists of Board members appointed by the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) of the four-county Central Area encompassing Bernalillo, Sandoval, Valencia, and Tarrant Counties.

As Administrative Entity, MRCOG enables the Workforce Connection to operate effectively and efficiently, setting strategic goals and giving direction to establish policies and practices for an adept workforce investment system. MRCOG provides board support, performs planning, provides technical assistance and training, performs monitoring, implements audit reviews, and assures compliance with WIA requirements. In addition, MRCOG has established a financial system to monitor expenditures, document financial operations, coordinate the annual audit, and oversee the cost of the Workforce Connection One-Stop operations.

Serving the job seeker and the employer

Workforce Connection serves the job seeker as well as the employer. It has five full service **One-Stop Career Shops** capable of meeting the specific needs of those looking for work, and those looking to hire qualified personnel.

If you are a **job seeker** living in Bernalillo, Tarrant, Valencia, or Sandoval County, New Mexico, Workforce Connection can help you select a new career, find a good job, locate a suitable education or training program, create effective resumes and letters, plan your finances and find benefits for which you may qualify, in addition to providing many other useful services.



See reverse for more information on services



If you are an **employer** in this four-county area, you can post your job openings and review the resumes of potential employees. Workforce Connection can also help you analyze the local labor market, review suitable training programs as well as access information concerning human resources legal issues and labor relations, and more.

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- identifying interests and skills
- obtaining education and/or services to get "employee ready"
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Professional Career Planning Services – Free!

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- Ultimate job resource web site available
- Online resume posting for job seekers

Job Seeker Tool Kit

- Resume builder: create or change resumes quickly
- Letter builder: write cover, follow-up, and acceptance letters
- Job search: search thousands of jobs throughout the nation
- Employer maps: obtain contact information on New Mexico businesses

Making A Career Match

- Learn steps to find your new career
- Analyze your skills and find the right occupational fit
- View occupational trends: wages, employment levels, education required
- Gather information on new occupations: current wages, employers, available jobs

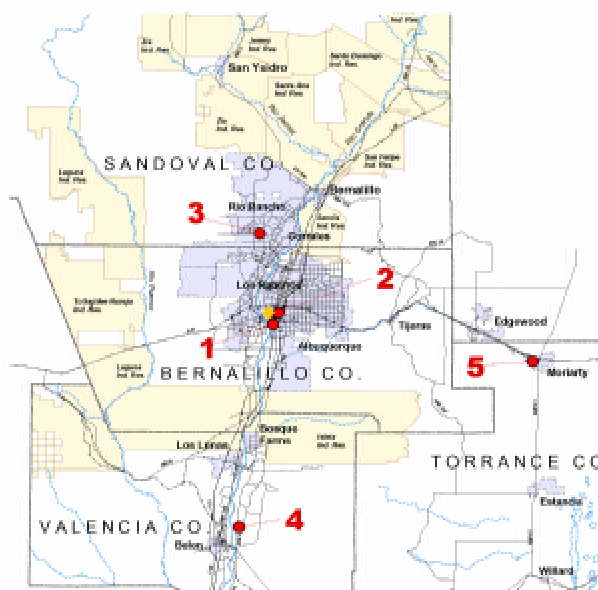
Education You Can Use

- Training providers: locate specific providers, schools, programs and websites
- Training programs: find a training or educational program in your field of interest

Scorecard for Success

- Check out the latest employment statistics and see which industries are growing in New Mexico
- See how many students complete training programs and what percentage find jobs
- Access the latest wage and labor market information to help guide you on the right career path

One-Stop Career Shops (See addresses below)



Workforce Connection Contact Information

1 Bernalillo County

Hispano Chamber
1309 4th St. Ste D
Albuquerque, NM 87102
PH: 505-247-8700

2 Bernalillo County

NM Dept. of Labor
501 Mountain Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
PH: 505-823-6601

3 Sandoval County

2418 Southern Blvd., Ste E
Rio Rancho, NM 87124
PH: 505-994-1900

4 Valencia County

UNM Valencia Campus
280 La Entrada Rd., Rms 210 & 222
Los Lunas, NM 87031
PH: 505-925-8959

5 Torrance County

Moriarty Chamber
777 Old Route 66
Moriarty, NM 87035
PH: 505-832-6774



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Administrative entity for
Workforce Connection
317 Commercial NE, Suite 104
Albuquerque, NM 87102

All offices open Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm
www.jobs.state.nm.us



Long Range Transportation Plan Must Change to Allow **GRIP** Money to Flow

Early in March the public was invited to comment on changes proposed to the 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the urban area that will make it possible to fund local projects with money from Governor Richardson's Investment Partnership and other new sources.

The 2025 MTP covers the period from 2003 to 2025. It includes a wide and diverse array of projects from walkways and bicycle trails to new roadway lanes and interchange reconstruction. The 2025 MTP was developed using the most up-to-date information available at the time regarding transportation needs, potential solutions, and available funding.

As the metropolitan planning organization for the urban area, MRCOG is responsible for developing the MTP for the Albuquerque metropolitan area. Local elected officials, technical staff and the public worked together to prepare the 2025 MTP, which was approved by the Metropolitan Transportation Board in May 2003.

The 2025 Plan is being amended to reflect the new funding available in the GRIP. The changes also allow projects that recently received Federal Special Appropriations to now move forward in the Plan.

MTP 2025 Amendment

The new funds make it possible to complete some critical projects sooner than expected, including:

- I-25, Tramway to Bernalillo (reconstruction & additional lanes)
- I-40, Carlisle to Juan Tabo (reconstruction & auxiliary lanes)
- I-40/Coors reconstruction
- I-40, Carnuel to Sedillo reconstruction
- Paseo del Volcan, Unser to Iris (two new lanes)

In addition, funds are being added to:

- Initiate commuter rail transportation between Belen and Bernalillo
- Complete a badly-needed analysis of the transportation needs on the Westside
- Reconstruct Coors, I-25 to Central
- Build a northbound frontage road on I-25 between Sunport and Gibson
- Reconstruct I-40, Canoncito to Rio Puerco
- Reconstruct I-40, Central to Coors while also adding lanes and two-way frontage roads

Plan Mission

The mission of the 2025 MTP is to strive to integrate "transit, pedestrian, bicycling, and motor vehicle modes of travel by increasing accessibility and mobility options for people and goods..." While this long range objective remains, a flexible planning process can adjust plans and programs to meet unexpected events and opportunities, while always keeping the long range objective firmly in view. Such is the case with the approval of GRIP. This funding gives the urban area an opportunity to move forward more quickly than anticipated with projects that support the 2025 MTP objectives. The Amendment modifies the projects and timeframes to reflect this new financial environment.

"We are excited about the opportunities provided by GRIP and new Federal funding to get these projects done sooner than we expected," said Lawrence Rael, MRCOG Executive Director. "This amendment is an important step to making these projects happen."

Amendment Timeline

Opportunities for written public comment on the proposed amendment ended on Wednesday, March 25th. Comments were also invited at the Public Involvement Committee and Transportation Coordinating Committee meetings in early April. Formal action by the Metropolitan Transportation Board is being requested at their April 22 meeting.

Future Planning Efforts

A full Update to the 2025 MTP is expected to begin in 2005. The Update will review the mission, goals, and objectives for long range transportation planning in the urban area. It will look at bicycle and pedestrian, transit, roadway, and intermodal needs. It will evaluate what has been accomplished under the 2025 MTP and consider the area's needs in light of the financial expectations through the year 2030. The result will be the 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Anyone interested in participating in this effort is asked to contact Loretta Tollefson, Transportation Program Manager, at 247-1750 or ltollefson@mrcog-nm.gov.



I-40 between Carlisle and Juan Tabo will be reconstructed using GRIP funds (top). The rails from Belen to Albuquerque may soon be carrying commuter passenger trains in addition to freight trains (bottom).

Economic Development News Briefs:

MRCOG Awarded Planning Grant

MRCOG recently received a three-year, \$150,000 planning grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA). The award enables MRCOG to continue its economic development planning program to strengthen the capacity of local governments to maximize their economic development potential.

Moving from an annual award to this three-year cycle gives MRCOG better footing to strengthen the local economy through long-range planning. MRCOG has been a designated Economic Development District since 1973, emphasizing distressed or underserved areas where community infrastructure improvements can support the local economy and help attract new jobs. For specifics on the economic development planning program, please contact Ann Simon, Economic Development Planner, asimon@mrcog-nm.gov.

Planning Strategies

MRCOG will be tracking economic development efforts in the region closely this year as it prepares for the **2005 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**. That document, published every five years by MRCOG, provides a big picture view of the economic development activities of the region.

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Mid-Region Council of Governments

Small Business Development Centers:

Catering to Entrepreneurs

The State of New Mexico benefits from 19 Small Business Development Centers around the state. Three centers are in State Planning and Development District 3, serving MRCOG's four-county region. The SBDCs provide confidential assistance with **business planning and financing, marketing and small business loans**. They also provide **technical assistance** with computer and other technical problems. For information about hours and locations, please contact Ann Simon, Economic Development Planner, at 247-1750.

Assistance to Bernalillo and Zia Pueblo

MRCOG is working with the Town of Bernalillo, Zia Pueblo, and Governor Richardson's Sun Symbol Task Force on a development proposal in Bernalillo. The project entails developing a 19.5-acre property owned by Zia Pueblo in a way that achieves the highest and best use of the land, derives income for the Tribe, and gross receipts for the Town of Bernalillo. In particular, Zia Pueblo Governor Peter Pino and Mayor Charles Aguilar along with administrative staff of the Town of Bernalillo have actively participated in this project. MRCOG is working to assist all parties to achieve their economic development goals.

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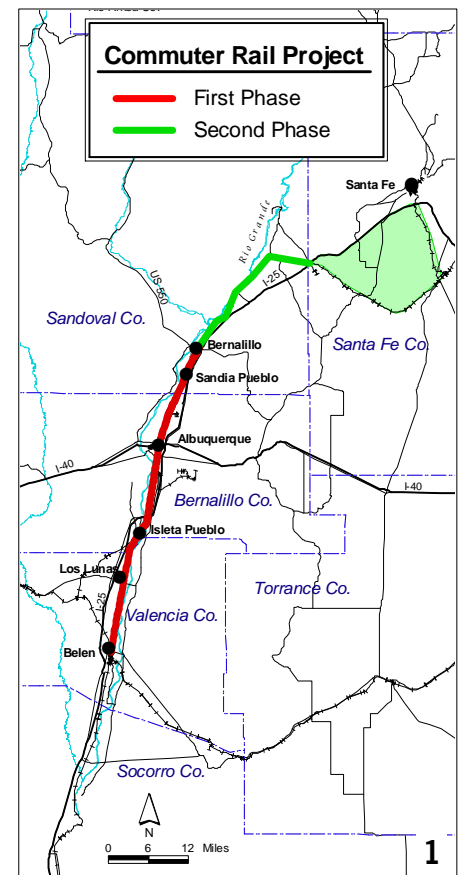


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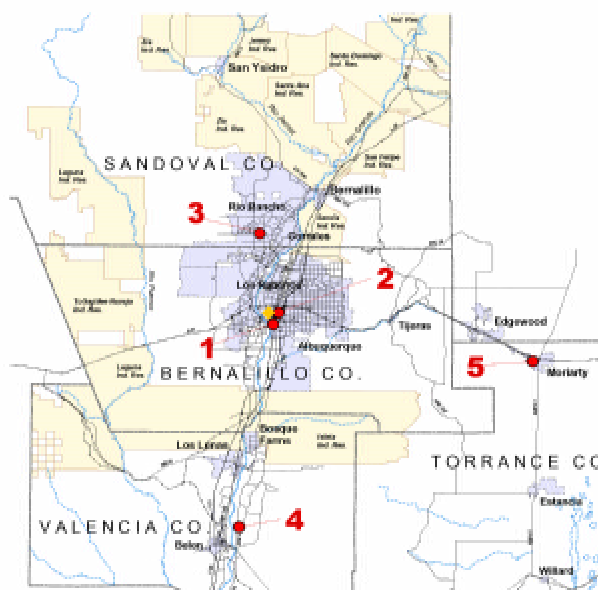
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5 Torrance County

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Long Range Transportation Plan Must Change to Allow **GRIP** Money to Flow

Early in March the public was invited to comment on changes proposed to the 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the urban area that will make it possible to fund local projects with money from **G**overnor **R**ichardson's **I**nternal **P**artnership and other new sources.

The 2025 MTP covers the period from 2003 to 2025. It includes a wide and diverse array of projects from walkways and bicycle trails to new roadway lanes and interchange reconstruction. The 2025 MTP was developed using the most up-to-date information available at the time regarding transportation needs, potential solutions, and available funding.

As the metropolitan planning organization for the urban area, MRCOG is responsible for developing the MTP for the Albuquerque metropolitan area. Local elected officials, technical staff and the public worked together to prepare the 2025 MTP, which was approved by the Metropolitan Transportation Board in May 2003.

The 2025 Plan is being amended to reflect the new funding available in the GRIP. The changes also allow projects that recently received Federal Special Appropriations to now move forward in the Plan.

MTP 2025 Amendment

The new funds make it possible to complete some critical projects sooner than expected, including:

- I-25, Tramway to Bernalillo (reconstruction & additional lanes)
- I-40, Carlisle to Juan Tabo (reconstruction & auxiliary lanes)
- I-40/Coors reconstruction
- I-40, Carnuel to Sedillo reconstruction
- Paseo del Volcan, Unser to Iris (two new lanes)

In addition, funds are being added to:

- Initiate commuter rail transportation between Belen and Bernalillo
- Complete a badly-needed analysis of the transportation needs on the Westside
- Reconstruct Coors, I-25 to Central
- Build a northbound frontage road on I-25 between Sunport and Gibson
- Reconstruct I-40, Canoncito to Rio Puerco
- Reconstruct I-40, Central to Coors while also adding lanes and two-way frontage roads

Plan Mission

The mission of the 2025 MTP is to strive to integrate "transit, pedestrian, bicycling, and motor vehicle modes of travel by increasing accessibility and mobility options for people and goods..." While this long range objective remains, a flexible planning process can adjust plans and programs to meet unexpected events and opportunities, while always keeping the long range objective firmly in view. Such is the case with the approval of GRIP. This funding gives the urban area an opportunity to move forward more quickly than anticipated with projects that support the 2025 MTP objectives. The Amendment modifies the projects and timeframes to reflect this new financial environment.

"We are excited about the opportunities provided by GRIP and new Federal funding to get these projects done sooner than we expected," said Lawrence Rael, MRCOG Executive Director. "This amendment is an important step to making these projects happen."

Amendment Timeline

Opportunities for written public comment on the proposed amendment ended on Wednesday, March 25th. Comments were also invited at the Public Involvement Committee and Transportation Coordinating Committee meetings in early April. Formal action by the Metropolitan Transportation Board is being requested at their April 22 meeting.

Future Planning Efforts

A full Update to the 2025 MTP is expected to begin in 2005. The Update will review the mission, goals, and objectives for long range transportation planning in the urban area. It will look at bicycle and pedestrian, transit, roadway, and intermodal needs. It will evaluate what has been accomplished under the 2025 MTP and consider the area's needs in light of the financial expectations through the year 2030. The result will be the 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Anyone interested in participating in this effort is asked to contact Loretta Tollefson, Transportation Program Manager, at 247-1750 or ltollefson@mrcog-nm.gov.



I-40 between Carlisle and Juan Tabo will be reconstructed using GRIP funds (top). The rails from Belen to Albuquerque may soon be carrying commuter passenger trains in addition to freight trains (bottom).

Economic Development News Briefs:

MRCOG Awarded Planning Grant

MRCOG recently received a three-year, \$150,000 planning grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA). The award enables MRCOG to continue its economic development planning program to strengthen the capacity of local governments to maximize their economic development potential.

Moving from an annual award to this three-year cycle gives MRCOG better footing to strengthen the local economy through long-range planning. MRCOG has been a designated Economic Development District since 1973, emphasizing distressed or underserved areas where community infrastructure improvements can support the local economy and help attract new jobs. For specifics on the economic development planning program, please contact Ann Simon, Economic Development Planner, asimon@mrcog-nm.gov.

Planning Strategies

MRCOG will be tracking economic development efforts in the region closely this year as it prepares for the **2005 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**. That document, published every five years by MRCOG, provides a big picture view of the economic development activities of the region.

MRCOG's **VIEWS**

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Mid-Region Council of Governments

Small Business Development Centers:

Catering to Entrepreneurs

The State of New Mexico benefits from 19 Small Business Development Centers around the state. Three centers are in State Planning and Development District 3, serving MRCOG's four-county region. The SBDCs provide confidential assistance with **business planning and financing, marketing and small business loans**. They also provide **technical assistance** with computer and other technical problems. For information about hours and locations, please contact Ann Simon, Economic Development Planner, at 247-1750.

Assistance to Bernalillo and Zia Pueblo

MRCOG is working with the Town of Bernalillo, Zia Pueblo, and Governor Richardson's Sun Symbol Task Force on a development proposal in Bernalillo. The project entails developing a 19.5-acre property owned by Zia Pueblo in a way that achieves the highest and best use of the land, derives income for the Tribe, and gross receipts for the Town of Bernalillo. In particular, Zia Pueblo Governor Peter Pino and Mayor Charles Aguilar along with administrative staff of the Town of Bernalillo have actively participated in this project. MRCOG is working to assist all parties to achieve their economic development goals.

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